

Hello Northampton Blue Devils of 2017,

Welcome to Preseason!

Coaches Barrett, Horton and I are so glad to see you here tonight. We've already begun planning and thinking about the upcoming season, and we're excited to begin.

Preseason training officially begins on Thursday, August 24. The schedule will be available soon. We have 10 practices in the preseason to conduct tryouts, unify and prepare our teams for a challenging new future in the Churchill League. Your job is to spend the next several months getting in excellent physical shape and honing your soccer skills so we can start to come together as a team from the first day. **You cannot cram fitness.** If we have to spend preseason conditioning to get in shape, we are starting the year at a disadvantage.

Tryouts: We will hold three tryouts in the first two days of the preseason. Unlike last year, we will begin with a full-program open tryout. If we have enough players trying out, we will have a Varsity team, JVA and JVB. Varsity and JVA are going to be playing at a very high level this year. Positions on these teams are highly competitive. JVB will still train at a very high level, but the team tends to play fewer games, placing more emphasis on training.

Fitness: On the first practice of tryouts, we will begin practice with a 1.5 mile run. There is no black-and-white "cut time" for the run, but players who hope to play varsity should try to finish under 10 minutes, 30 seconds (7 minute mile). We will hold tryouts immediately after the run. The takeaway here is that you need to be in such good shape that you can demonstrate good soccer skills after a physically challenging run.

Due to the extreme physical demands of the sport, make sure to get your core in shape as well. There are many ways to develop a strong core, and you don't need a fancy gym membership to do so. I personally like the body weight workouts by Funk Roberts (MMA trainer) on Youtube. I also recommend learning a good rope-jumping routine. This will give you a huge cardio workout while improving agility and stamina.

Our philosophy: Soccer is the beautiful game. We are going to bring pride and honor to our school and to our city. As high school athletes, you are expected to completely commit yourself to your team. Make a pledge to yourself to be a better soccer player at the end of every training. I will dedicate myself fully to your development and success as a program. Your teammates and I expect you to do the same.

This is going to be a really fun year. I'm looking forward to working with you all soon.

Coach Brown

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Some Useful Information:

Training during the regular season: We will train every weekday we do not have a game. Varsity will train every Sunday before a Monday game. Last year we trained from 3-5, allowing students time to receive extra help from teachers after school. We are hoping to train at that same time this year, but we are awaiting confirmation on this. Players are expected to be dressed and ready to begin practice on time. Practices will end on time as well. I recognize that the end of practice was an issue for some teams last year, but we are committed to making sure this is not the case this year.

Starters and Subs: It is my expectation that you will show up in August in excellent shape, having worked on the skills you need to succeed in your position. If you are our starter in a given position, I expect you to be able to play strong and well for long spans of time. Some players will play for as close to 80 minutes as possible. Other positions will be shared. The success of our team depends on our substitutes. If you start out the year a sub, there is a good chance you will see your time increase if you can demonstrate progress in your skills and/or chemistry with your team mates. It can be frustrating to be a sub. Have patience, work hard, respond to suggestions and keep a positive attitude. Be open to playing a different position. Learn a new set of skills and perhaps you can get extra time in the field in a second position.

Varsity and JV: Varsity will roster 17 players. If players are unable to play in a match due to injury, illness or another reason, the player who best suits the overall needs of our roster due to the vacancy will be called up from the JVs to play. *(For example, if a Holding Midfielder is injured, it is possible I will bring a starting JVA Holding mid up to Varsity for a match. It is also possible that I will move a Varsity substitute Centerback or an attacking mid into this position, and call up a JV to sub in one of these positions.)* This will be a temporary appointment to Varsity, and a player who plays Varsity for a short time should feel proud to be called up. When it is time to return to playing with the JVs, he should take the experience he has picked up playing with the Varsity and use it to contribute positively to his JV team.

If you do not make the team you had hoped for, be patient and do good work. It is good to be a leader on any team, your contributions will be noticed. Your chance to get "called up" could happen at any moment.

Communication with coaches: The rules about communication for this team are the same for all teams at NHS. If you have questions or issues, the first step is for the player to talk with the coach. Your coach should be able to give you some pointers in what to work on during trainings and matches. If a player has spoken with the coach, done what the coach has asked, and feels like more discussion is necessary, here is the chain of communication that we ask you to follow. Hopefully, your problem will be resolved early on in the chain:

Player talks to coach, implements suggestions, seeks feedback

Parent talks to coach

Player or Parent of JVA or JVB player talks to Head Coach Brown

Player talks with Athletic Director

Parent talks with Athletic Director

Player or parent talks with Principal

TRYOUTS

Attitude: You must be willing to work hard. You must believe that every training and every game is an opportunity for you to improve as a soccer player. You must be willing to support the success of your team and your teammates and own your role and responsibility in that success. Remember that your coaches might be considering how you fit in several different positions on the field. Having an eager 'can do' attitude, and willingness to try what the coach is suggesting will go a long way.

Passing, left foot and right foot: accuracy and weight (how hard or soft)

Appropriate type of Passing, left foot and right foot: on the ground, in the air, driven, chipped.

Receiving passes: Is your body positioned properly to receive a pass? Are you putting yourself in the right position to do something with the ball once you've received it?

First touch, left and right foot: when you receive the ball, does your first touch on the ball put it into a place where you can do something positive with it?

Tackling, left and right foot: Tackle hard. Use your body. Persevere and tackle again. Recover and continue to pressure if you lose a tackle. Don't run slowly or in a curved line to avoid a tackle. Don't give up an opportunity to turn a ball over immediately because you are afraid to tackle with your off foot. Don't.

Defending, pressure and cover: Do you approach an attacker properly to press them? Do you take a proper defensive stance to make their play

predictable? Do you recover to cover your teammates if you get beaten? Do you provide proper support to a teammate when he needs it?

Vision of the field, attacking: Are you getting your head up and seeing opportunities when you have the ball? How do you distribute? Are you providing support for teammates with the ball? Are you making smart runs to receive the ball? Are you creating space for teammates?

Vision of the field, defending: Are you providing cover for your teammates who are pressing the ball? Are you accepting your defensive responsibilities for the team at every moment? Are you talking with teammates about defensive responsibilities as free attacking players move across the field?

Finishing: shooting with all surfaces. Are you motivated to take a shot when the opportunity presents? How is your accuracy? How is your read on the situation – position of the keeper, approaching defenders, placement of supporting teammates?

Service: Through balls, overs, crosses, flicks, corner kicks, service for a header, service with a header.

Headers, attacking and defending

Dribbling 1 v 1: Can you take players on to penetrate, create space? Can you hold the ball to get players into the box?

Ready position: if you are standing upright, knocking the ball around like it is a Saturday afternoon at the park, this sends a very clear message about how you value this training opportunity. Be in a position to be on the ball at a second's notice. Be balanced. Take advantage of every touch on the ball in training and in matches.

Speed & Stamina,

Determination & Perseverance

Communication

Sportsmanship and being a good teammate: We will play to win, and we will play hard against our opponents, taking advantage of our strengths, their weaknesses, and any opportunities that hard work and luck present to us. We will do so honorably, always. Cheating, intentional injury of opponents, disrespect of referees, opponents, or opposing coaches will not be tolerated. Mistreatment of your teammates (or players, managers, coaches throughout the program) for any reason are damaging to the program that you are expected to be honoring, and will be taken very seriously.

Likely Preseason Schedule: Players are expected to attend every practice. This is especially essential during preseason. Vacation plans should be made accordingly.

This schedule may change, please look for updates this summer. Tryouts start on the 24th though. That is certain.

Thursday, Aug. 24: Double Sessions. 1 in the morning, 1 in the evening.

Friday, Aug. 25: Double Sessions. 1 in the morning, 1 in the evening.

Saturday, Aug. 26: Morning practice

Sunday, Aug. 26: Rest Day

Monday, Aug. 27: Afternoon or Evening Practice

Tuesday, Aug. 28: Afternoon or Evening Practice

Wednesday, Aug. 29: Afternoon or Evening Practice

Thursday, Aug. 30: Afternoon or Evening Practice

Friday, Aug. 31: Afternoon or Evening Practice

Saturday, Sept. 1: Morning Practice

Sunday, Sept. 2: Rest Day

Monday, Sept. 3 (Labor Day): Afternoon or Evening Practice

Hello Parents of a NHS Blue Devil Soccer Player,

We're very excited about the upcoming season, and glad to have your son as a part of our program. This is going to be a great year. If you are new to NHS Soccer, and haven't gotten a chance to cheer for the team in our stadium, I assure you, you are in for a great time. Having spent many years coaching High School and Youth Soccer, and being the parent of two soccer players, I have some words of advice on how you can make this season a positive one for your son.

Positivity: Please focus on the positive.

On the sidelines: Cheer when your son (or his teammate) does something positive on the field. If a kid makes a mistake on the field, he knows he's made a mistake. Loud public confirmation of this mistake rarely improves a player's confidence and therefore performance. Please model the excellent sportsmanship we are trying to impart on your sons. Do not yell at referees.

After the game: Usually the less said about a game the better. I have seen many talented players develop huge psychological barriers to success on their car rides home. The best advice I can give here – no analysis unless the kid brings it up, keep it short, keep it positive.

Support coaches: All three of us are experienced professional coaches and veteran teachers. Please keep a positive attitude toward your son's coach. For your son to have a winning attitude, he needs to believe in his team and believe in his coach.

The Purpose of playing sports: Some kids live to play a certain sport. Other kids play sports because it's fun, and so they can spend time with their friends. Playing soccer will certainly get your son in good physical shape. Perhaps most importantly, he is likely to learn some valuable life lessons and social skills. Part of the benefit to playing a team sport is the psychological growth players experience by being a participant in something greater than themselves. They learn the value of being a hardworking, responsible member of a group, and the rewards that come from realizing that an entire group of guys has supported them.

One of the most valuable opportunities to grow comes through overcoming adversity. Sometimes you lose. Sometimes you don't get in a game for as much time as you'd like. Sometimes you aren't a starter, even though you want to be. As parents, we can jump too quickly to solving our kids' problems the moment they become uncomfortable. It is hard to see our kids struggle, but sometimes this is just the sensation they need to motivate them. The best way to support your son when he experiences adversity this

year is to guide him through the process of solving his own problems. If he is frustrated with playing time, please have him ask his coach for areas he can focus on improvement. Encourage him to be coachable, and work to make the improvements the coach is looking to see.

Coaching from the Sidelines: Please don't. For players to develop their soccer IQ, they need to think independently, try things and see how they work. Also, there are a variety of contradicting tactical plans in soccer. You don't know the tactical plan, so you may be giving a player the wrong advice.

If you have concerns and do not feel that your son is getting the information he needs to succeed from his coach or from me, please reach out via email so we can make a plan to talk (provided you have already spoken with Joe or Evan if they are his coach). We are all looking forward to a great season, and I want to make sure that the boys are getting the most out of the experience. I hope to see you all on the sidelines this fall. Go Devils!

Brian Brown

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